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ABSTRACT

The Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) provides an extensive program of support services to integrate handicapped students whenever possible into existing programs. Concerted efforts are first made during the admissions process when handicapped students are identified and students are provided with the assistance they need to take required placement tests (e.g., oral interpreters are provided for the deaf). Then at registration, special academic counseling services are provided which circumvent the need for handicapped students to wait in long lines or go to areas of the college that are difficult to reach. As required by law, handicapped students are mainstreamed into all regular remedial and college-level programs. While remedial English programming was once conducted separately for deaf students, these students are now integrated into the English as a Second Language Program. Throughout the semester, CCP's Programs for Handicapped Persons Division provides several support services: (1) arranging for the provision of special materials or personnel (e.g., talking books or volunteer notetakers); (2) answering the questions of faculty and lab personnel; (3) providing comprehensive counseling services; (4) serving as a liaison with various agencies and community groups; and (5) securing funds to purchase special equipment or run special programs. (JP)

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AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

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An Integrated Approach to Support Services for Handicapped Students

Sharon Woltz
Judy Davidson

Community Colleges have historically been in the forefront of educating the "non-traditional" student. One of the most recent groups to enter the community college student body are the handicapped.

Community College of Philadelphia has an extensive program of services to handicapped students. It is our goal to integrate the disabled student whenever possible into already existing programs. This presentation describes our approach to services to handicapped students to include coordination with our college's tutoring program, pre-college remedial programs and development of off-campus programming for special needs populations.

Coordination of support services to handicapped students begins with the admissions process. At Community College of Philadelphia (CCP), most handicapped individuals call our office for information before they apply. If they don't the college application includes a confidential questionnaire which asks about handicapping conditions and asks if the applicant wants an appointment with our office. Other counselors at the school refer disabled students to us when they are identified at pre-admissions counseling groups or in placement testing. Although CCP has an open admissions policy, the college has instituted a program of placement testing of all incoming students to determine their skill levels in reading comprehension, composition, and math. On the basis of the test results, students are registered in developmental programs or in regular college courses. A handicapped person may need assistance to take the tests. In broad terms, the various disability groups need the following kinds of help: the mobility impaired need assurance of an accessible test site. Deaf applicants require a sign language

or oral interpreter. Blind, visually impaired, and in some cases learning disabled students need a reader and/or writer. Others may need to be allowed extra time to complete the tests. These needs also must be met in the classroom.

Registration is the next step in the process. All students at the college register through an advisor, who may be a faculty member in the student's major subject, or a counselor. For those handicapped students who need special assistance to complete registration, the counselor for handicapped students, Judy Davidson, serves as advisor. This circumvents the need to wait in long lines or to gain access to parts of the building that are hard to reach. We also schedule deaf students who are taking the same subject in the same section to cut down on the cost of interpreters. Some disabled students come to school via private transportation, so we arrange their class hours to fit their transportation schedule. At CCP, we have the benefit of having most of our classes in one eight-story building and only occasionally have a problem with classes being scheduled in inaccessible locations. A more spread-out campus with numerous classroom buildings will pose more scheduling problems for students in wheelchairs and on crutches.

As required by law, handicapped students are mainstreamed into all regular remedial and college-level programs. We will discuss section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act's provisions for disabled students in higher education in detail. One exception to total mainstreaming we have made is providing remedial English programming for deaf students, whose language needs may be very different from those of hearing students. This year, we mainstreamed deaf students into English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Those who have been deaf from an early age (pre-verbal) and who have used American Sign Langauge as their main form of communication are truly non-

native speakers of English. In fact, sign language, a visual language, differs structurally from English more than many foreign languages. CCP has three other major developmental programs, all of which include special tutoring in the college's Learning Lab. We coordinate with Learning Lab staff to be sure handicapped students are integrated. Each semester we provide a special orientation for tutors on working with handicapped students. We also include a check list of special tips in the tutors' manual. Tutoring sometimes requires one-to-one assistance which may not be needed in the regular college classroom.

Many support services need to be arranged at the start of each semester. For blind students, we try to find out their required textbooks in each subject and order them as far in advance as possible from Recordings for the Blind, an agency in New York that records thousands of college titles. The individual student must be registered with the agency, and tapes go directly to the student on loan. Those books that are not available can be sent to Recordings for the Blind for taping but to save time we often hire student readers to record books and other course materials. Student workers are also scheduled to meet regularly throughout the term with blind or learning disabled students to help read and write course assign ments. Deaf students ask for volunteer notetakers in each class so that they can focus their attention on their interpreter. This is one of the few places where we use volunteers, since paid assistants tend to be more motivated and dependable. However, when money is not available, volunteers are a great resource. Sign language or oral interpreters are assigned to every classroom in which deaf students are enrolled. Interpreters must be paid professionals whose wages vary from about $7 to $13 per hour. We can provide more specific information about locating and hiring interpreters later if anyone needs it. At present CCP has been able to cover this cost through grant money. In some instances,

the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation will pay. Sometimes we hire student workers as mobility aides. Most of our disabled students get around on their own, but may need assistance in special circumstances. For example, a photography student who used crutches needed a helper to carry and set up large camera equipment.

Liaison with teachers is one of the most important functions of our office. At CCP, our handicapped students are highly visible because of our location in one main building, so most faculty members are at least aware that the students are there. However, many have questions about the student's limitations and question what the teacher's legal as well as unofficial responsibilities are. The students should be the experts on their needs. They should mutually agree with their teachers at the start of each semester on how coursework will be completed, how tests will be taken, how much time they might need with the teacher outside of class, etc. We have seen various faculty responses to disabled students:

- flexible, adaptive, creative, supportive
- overwhelmed, afraid, turned off, hostile
- bend-over-backwards, condescending, lowered expectations

An excellent resource for ideas and information for teachers is a publication called The College Student With A Disability: A Faculty Handbook, published by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. It describes how people with various disabilities require accommodation in the classroom and gives specific suggestions. From time to time we offer orientation workshops for faculty. We try to let teachers know what kind of help is available through our office (including readers, interpreters, counseling). The American Association for the Advancement of Science has some publications on adapting science courses for the disabled.

Counseling is an important aspect of integrating the disabled college students. Some students, particularly those who have gone to non-mainstreamed

schools, may lack maturity and good social skills. These students need to gain confidence in asking for what they need and knowing how to discuss their disabilities with teachers and others. Like other college students, disabled students need to improve study skills, choose curricula, and relate educational goals to future career goals. We assist graduating students with resume-writing, preparing for a job search, and to some extent placement.

We also serve as liaison with various agencies and community groups, including the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of the Visually Handicapped, Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, rehabilitation hospitals, United Cerebral Palsy Association, and accessible transportation services. We are members of interagency groups such as Delaware Valley Council on Services to the Handicapped and International Year of Disabled Persons planning committee. Through our Division of Community Services we can offer classes at locations other than our main campus. We currently offer college classes for residents at Inglis House, the institutional living center in Philadelphia. This alleviates problems of transportation and personal care.

We have been successful in securing funds to purchase special equipment and run special programs. In general we don't believe in spending a lot of money on "fancy technology" unless there is a demonstrated need. We have a number of tape recorders for student and reader use. We have a Visualtek print enlarger for the visually impaired. We did use grant money to purchase three electronic communication boards which have allowed students with no speech to function much more effectively in school.

With some advance planning and utilization of resources, disabled students can be integrated into the mainstream of college activities. Look to the students and to professionals in the community for basic information on their needs. The students will present the same range of abilities and

interests as the rest of the college population, and in most cases will not need extraordinary kinds of assistance to succeed.